

Duterte, who appears intermittently in compelling bits of news footage, upstaging the mercenaries with his undeniable charisma and even more outrageous claims about his moral authority and power to cull Filipino citizens with impunity.

Bato II and his mercenaries create ethical problems for the documentary as well. The camera follows them on several operations, including one in which they stalk their prey and another in which they ostensibly pull off an actual hit. The documentary uses shaky hidden camera footage (some of it taken in green night vision mode) to depict those events, but the killings are either conveniently postponed or not shown on camera. The aftermath of their crimes is omitted as well, along with corresponding news footage or newspaper headlines about their hits.

The decision to avert the camera's gaze from acts of killing and to refrain from directly linking the mercenaries to specific crimes make sense from ethical, legal, and safety standpoints. This predicament of the documentarist's possible complicity in a crime recalls the controversy surrounding Jon Alpert's *The Philippines: Life, Death, Revolution* (1986), which showed communist forces ambushing dozens of soldiers. Alpert may have had some advance knowledge of the attack but perhaps did not have the means to forewarn the government troops. He covered the siege from a safe distance but took closer shots of the grisly aftermath. Though Alpert faced scrutiny over his ethics, the compelling piece earned him an Emmy award. In the case of *The Nightcrawlers*, one wonders why the documentary spent so much time on the mercenaries and their operations if it could not show or validate their role in the "war."

*The Nightcrawlers* is the first filmmaking credit for London-based Mora, a graduate of two elite universities (Oxford and Yale) who trained as an architect and has done public policy work for the United Nations. His choice of topic and expressive use of visuals recall Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2012), already a canonical work of the postmodern documentary. The scant 40-minute running time does not allow *The Nightcrawlers* much room to develop and resolve its thematic and stylistic elements, but the work never falters in communicating the urgency of its subject matter. If Duterte's Philippines is a bellwether for the global resurgence of murderous despotism, what Mora's film offers is a vicarious experience of the nightmare that may lie ahead for fallen democracies.

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**Asian Americans.** Renee Tajima-Peña. San Francisco: Center for Asian American Media, 2020. 270 min.

*Asian Americans* is a five-part documentary produced by the Center for Asian American Media that was broadcast on PBS stations

throughout the United States; it was also available to stream on PBS video in May 2020 to celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. The last documentary series that focused on panethnic Asian American history was *Ancestors in the Americas* released in 2003. While *Ancestors in the Americas* covered the history of Asian migration to the United States from the 1700s to the early 1900s, *Asian Americans* spans Asian American history from the early migration of Asian laborers to the United States until the present moment.

The first episode “Breaking Ground,” tells the stories of early Asian migrants to the United States, including Chinese railroad workers, Filipinos migrating to the United States after the Philippines became a U.S. possession, and Muslim ship workers and silk traders. The second episode, titled “A Question of Loyalty,” focuses on Asian American lives during WWII. Titled “Generation Rising,” the fourth episode covers Asian American activism in against the Vietnam War, in the Civil Rights Movement, and in the Third World Liberation Front which established ethnic studies at San Francisco State College, now University. This episode also covers Southeast Asian refugee migration to the United States after the Vietnam War and the subsequent anti-refugee backlash. The fifth episode, titled “Breaking Through” discusses the challenges that Asian American communities have faced since the early 1980s. It discusses Asian American activism after the murder of Vincent Chin and after the rise of racist incidents against anyone perceived to be Muslim after the September 11 attacks, and to establish a path to citizenship for DREAMERS, undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as youngsters.

A multi-generational family perspective is a repeated narrative focusing over the five episodes. Interviews of living descendants tell multi-generational family histories of Asian Americans. The first story featured is that of Antero Cabrera, a member of the indigenous Bontoc tribe in the Philippines who worked for American anthropologist Albert Jenks. Jenks was responsible for staffing the Philippine village at the St. Louis Fair in 1904 and brought Cabrera to the United States as an Igorot subject in the fair. Much of the second episode is dedicated to telling the story of the Uno family, a family torn apart by anti-Japanese racism both before and during WWII. The eldest son left the United States, due to limited employment opportunities for him there as a journalist, and eventually became a Japanese propagandist. The rest of the family was interned, but two other sons served in the U.S. military during WWII. Eventually, three of the younger Uno siblings became activists demanding an official apology and reparations for the internment of Japanese Americans. Other individuals recount their grandparents’ experiences on Angel Island; being one of the only Asian families in a predominantly white suburb after WWII; being targeted by the Cold War era Chinese confession program for being a paper son; and being raised by Filipino farm workers in California’s Central Valley. Recounting family stories allows the documentary to tell diverse stories of Asian American women; these include Mary Tape, a young Chinese girl working

in a brothel who escapes and eventually fights a losing battle for her children to enroll in white schools; Susan Anh Cuddy, the first Asian American female U.S. Naval Officer, and many others. Focusing on stories of Asian American families with long roots in the United States allows for the inclusion of the stories of Asian American women and challenges the “forever foreigner” stereotype of Asian Americans but this narrative framing is limiting because it naturalizes heteronormativity. Consequently stories such as the homosocial bonds in Chinese bachelor societies and any queer readings of Asian American history and experience are also ignored.

Another running theme through the entire documentary is Asian American activism contributions to fighting for civil rights for all Americans. The documentary highlights the legal challenges that early Asian Americans mounted to combat discrimination since their inability to become naturalized citizens closed off other avenues of redress. The role that Asian American activists played in the Hawaiian statehood movement is also covered, with an emphasis on how Hawaiian statehood led to Asian American representation in the U.S. Congress. Asian American participation in the anti-Vietnam war movement, in the fight for ethnic studies, in the civil rights movement, in the expansion of hate crime legislation, for citizenship for DREAMERS, and against the immigration detention camps on the border are all covered. The documentary’s focus on Asian Americans as immigrants and on their fight for citizenship and civil rights minimizes U.S. settler colonialism and the impact it has had on Native Pacific Islanders. The only incorporation of a Pacific Islander perspective demonstrates how they continue to be an afterthought to popular understandings of what it means to be Asian American, despite the fact that Pacific Islanders are often lumped with Asian Americans as Asian Pacific Americans or Asian American Pacific Islanders. The documentary does address how the United States overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy and illegally annexed Hawaii. However, the story of Hawaiian statehood is told mainly as the triumphant result of Asian Americans gaining political power with only a brief reflection on how Hawaiian residents were only given the choice of remaining a territory or becoming a state—not of restoring the islands’ political sovereignty. Given that the documentary begins with U.S. imperialism in the Philippines, it missed the opportunity to discuss Guam, Samoa, and Hawaii as territories acquired by the United States at the same time, and to understand how U.S. global power both leads to settler colonialism in the Pacific and creates the conditions that lead to Asian migration to the United States.

Despite these limitations, *Asian Americans*, is an excellent introduction to Asian American history. Clips of this documentary can be useful not only in teaching Asian American Studies courses but for incorporating Asian American history into courses on American history and culture.

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